

Valley End C of E (VC) Infant School

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Headteacher: Mr Richard Mead BA (Hons) PGCE PG Cert

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Dear Parents

Following on from our successful e-safety day and evening, I am pleased to be able to share some essential points that Sharon Girling has fed back to us. Some of the game content described is extremely graphic but I feel a duty report her findings and pass on any relevant information.

A large number of our pupils have their own tablet, Xbox or Playstation and approximately 50% of the children stated that their parents don't check their devices nor do they have parental controls on them. Please be aware that online safety is a life skill. Children are put at danger if given devices and not taught how to use them properly and efficiently. It's a little like learning how to cross the road.

Covering the camera lens on devices is also a good bit of advice.

Passwords

Recommended advice is that pupils and parents should always use passwords that contain 10 digits, each with a number, a capital letter, a lower case letter and a character.

Talking Angela

This is an app for mobile devices and tablets. It is a little cat that purrs and speaks to young children but can be risqué. Some pupils had used it on their mobile phones and tablets.

Xbox and Playstation

We did have a child in Reception as well as years 1 and 2 mention playing Call of Duty, Grand Theft Auto and Assassin's Creed as well as some age appropriate games. They know the characters that are in them and quoted some of the scenes.

Call of Duty – This is a first-person shooter in which players control a U.S. soldier who works for the C.I.A. and participates in skirmishes, stealth espionage, assassinations and interrogations involving torture. Players use a wide variety of weapons such as pistols, rifles, machine guns and explosives to injure/kill enemies. Combat can generate pools of blood and dismembered limbs. Players can use enemy bodies as human shields and execute them at close range. In one sequence, broken glass is placed into the mouth of a man while he is repeatedly punched, causing blood to spill from his mouth. Language such as 'f**k,' 'c**t,' 'b**tch,' and 'sh*t' can be heard in the dialogue as normal language.



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Grand Theft Auto – This is an ‘open world’ action game in which players choose from two distinct storylines: *The Lost and Damned* and *The Ballad of Gay Tony*. In *The Lost and Damned*, players assume the role of Johnny Klebitz, a member of the lost motorcycle gang; in *The Ballad of Gay Tony*, players control Luis Lopez, the body guard and assistant to night club owner ‘Gay Tony’ Prince. Set in the world of *Grand Theft Auto IV*, the game depicts a vast urban landscape which includes a criminal underworld that the protagonist must navigate through in order to progress. Players complete various missions that either advance the main storyline or award the player with in-game currency and connections.

Many of the missions require players to engage in criminal activity: stealing cars, robbing banks, taking out drug addicts (beating them with a baseball bat or shooting them), running drugs and guns and killing rival gang members. Players use pistols, machine guns, baseball bats, Molotov cocktails and grenades to kill enemies and occasionally civilians. Blood often spurts out of injured characters, stains the walls/ground and occasionally sprays onto the screen. In one sequence, a decapitated head – the camera lingers on the bloody image for a few seconds – is found inside a box. Within the free-roaming context (i.e., not missions), players have the ability to attack police officers and pedestrians on the streets, in subway stations, etc.; however, a ‘Wanted Level’ - penalty system discourages these acts by triggering a broad police search.

During the course of the game, players can encounter some sexually suggestive material: strip clubs with lap dancers wearing ‘panties’; sex shops that contain phallic toys; and suggestive TV ads that parody video games, *anime*, and reality TV shows. During a cut scene in *The Lost and Damned*, the central character encounters a man just after he has received a full-body massage; as their conversation ends, there is a brief depiction of full-frontal nudity. Players are able to pick up prostitutes for certain ‘services’ (e.g., masturbation, fellatio, intercourse) during the game: the sexual acts are not graphically depicted – they occur off-camera with characters fully clothed. The most pertinent instances of sexual content occur in the episode *The Ballad of Gay Tony*. While the two are fully clothed; a female character performs fellatio on the central character as he sits on a chair – the camera fixes on the woman’s bobbing head from behind.

Alcohol and drug use are also depicted in the game. In a ‘Champagne drink-off’ mini-game, players compete with another character to see who can drink a full bottle of champagne faster, when players visit a bar, they can take shots of liquor until they are drunk – if the central character drinks the champagne too fast or drinks too many shots, he will vomit and pass out. Although the protagonist is never depicted using drugs, a few ancillary characters sometimes can be seen smoking marijuana or snorting cocaine. Strong profanity (e.g., ‘f**k,’ ‘sh*t.’ and ‘c*nt’) and racial epithets (e.g., ‘n*gger,’ ‘sp*c,’ and ‘sl*pes’) can be heard.



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Assassin's Creed – This is an action-adventure game in which players assume the role of a pirate looking to amass a fortune in the 17th Century. As players explore open-world environments, they interact with pirates, travel between ports, and engage in combat against the Royal Navy and Spanish Colonies. Players can also engage in swordfights with armed soldiers on ground; players can also employ stealth kills using various weapons (e.g., concealed blades, blow guns) to incapacitate enemy soldiers. Some sequences depict pistol shots to the head and characters sometimes depicted around corpses. During the course of the game, the dialogue references sexual material (e.g., “when you catch a dose from a whore and must treat it with quicksilver” and “they come here to sell their slaves. They stir up trouble and violate our women”. Players’ character can purchase and consume alcohol at taverns, resulting in screen-distortion effects; one prolonged sequence depicts a drunken character having hallucinations. The words “f*ck,” “shi*t,” and ‘c*nt” are heard in the dialogue.

Nationally only 39% of parents have installed parental controls at home, which is shocking when we are told that

- 68% of children under the age of 13 believe everything they see online
- 25% of children will meet someone offline that they have met online.

It is really essential that if a child informs you, their parent or carer that something has occurred online that you do not react negatively or show disappointment towards your child. It is likely to discourage future engagement.

Some tips are:

- a) Download an advert blocker to stop the annoying and in some instances inappropriate ads that come up on the web browser – adblockplus.org
- b) Download Metacert to help block adult pornographic websites – family-safety.metacert.com
- c) Bookmark the favoured websites for your child in order that you can safely watch that content which is appropriate.
- d) When you are looking to get your child to finish their game, let them know that there is 30mins, 20mins, 10 mins left so that they are in the process of finishing off part of the game. Telling them to stop without a warning could lead to frustration!
- e) The CEOP You Tube channel has some useful films for parents to watch with your child. But these should be watched in a fun way. Think about it as your child’s time to teach their parent and perhaps eat ice-cream or popcorn as if they were at the cinema – youtube.com/user/ceop.



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- f) As so many young people are playing Minecraft we would urge both parents and teachers to play the game with them. It is the source of a lot of frustration with children that their accounts are 'hacked' and the structures they had built are destroyed by unknown third parties.

The children all enjoyed learning both Sids Tips and the SMART rules. It may be a good idea to ask if they can remember these?

I have attached a leaflet 'Online Safety' Tips for Young People which could be of further interest.

Kind Regards

Mr R Mead

Headteacher



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